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M. Zehnder said that he thought that we were, on the whole, fortunate to have Khrushchev in power in the U.S.S.R., rather than Molotov and the other members of the Old Guard. Khrushchev was a demagogue and an uncultivated peasant. But he was a pragmatist who was not wedded to the intellectual dogma of world communism - in fact, M. Zehnder believed that he would be prepared, on terms, to abandon the conception of world revolution. He was a very able and quick-witted politician, but he was far more accessible than Stalin had ever been. Above all, any concessions extracted from him must be clothed in such a way as appear to add to his glory in the eyes of the Russian public.

M. Zehnder believed that Khrushchev's view of the international scene was still dominated by the fear that the United States intended sooner or later to attack Russia. When M. Zehnder tried to argue to the contrary, Khrushchev produced evidence of bellicose speeches by leading American generals. When M. Zehnder retorted that it was the American practice to allow generals to express their own views in public, Khrushchev countered that if Eisenhower did not agree with his generals he could always issue a dementi. To this Zehnder replied that things did not work that way in the States, but Khrushchev remained unconvinced. The latter's overwhelming desire, M. Zehnder believed, was for Eisenhower to sign a formal undertaking that the U.S.A. would not attack Soviet Russia or her satellites.

Khrushchev, M. Zehnder continued, was prepared to perpetuate the status quo in Europe, with the one exception that he was not prepared to leave a Western outpost in the middle of it in the form of a free Berlin. Such an outpost would be a permanent insult to his pride. While M. Zehnder admitted that the West could not give way over Berlin, he did not think that Khrushchev would do so either. Consequently the situation was very dangerous, and if it continued to drift as at present, we should in the near future - if not necessarily in May - without any doubt find a polite East German officer demanding to see all entry papers to Berlin from the West.

/M. Zehnder

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M. Zehnder thought that the only way to gain time now was for us to agree to hold a Summit Conference in the very near future. (He clearly attached little importance to the preparatory Foreign Ministers' Conference, though he did not like to say so too bluntly.) The point of the Summit Conference was that Khrushchev would be there in person. That was one of his great aims, and it would in itself flatter him so much that he might quite possibly be ready to give the West a breathing space of several years. M. Zehnder did not believe that preparations for the Conference were of any importance. One could not foresee in what direction Khrushchev would argue, and the great thing was to have him at the conference table. He was susceptible to flattery, and it was only with him, and not with any of his subordinates, that any progress in any direction could be made. It was therefore a mistake, and in any case unrealistic, to try to limit the Summit talks to any particular aspect of foreign affairs. To do so would merely rub him up the wrong way and reduce the prospects of doing a deal with him.

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